

REMARKS

Claims 1-17, 29 and 30 are currently pending in the subject application

By the instant amendment, claims 1-9 are canceled and claims 10, 14, 29 and 30 are amended to more particularly claim the subject matter of the present invention. No new matter is added by the amendments to claims 10, 14, 29 and 30.

Claims 10-17, 29 and 30 are presented to the Examiner for further prosecution on the merits.

A. Introduction:

In the Office Action mailed on November 10, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 4,467,345 to Ozawa (“the Ozawa reference”) in view of United States Patent No. 4,385,591 to Matsukawa (“the Matsukawa reference”). The Examiner rejected claims 10-17, 29 and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Ozawa reference in view of the Matsukawa reference and United States Patent No. 5,229,642 to Hara et al. (“the Hara et al. reference”).

B. Asserted Rejection of Claims 1-9 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Ozawa reference in view of the Matsukawa reference.

Claims 1-9 are canceled by the instant amendment and, accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-9 is respectfully requested.

C. Asserted Rejection of Claims 10-17, 29 and 30 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 10-17, 29 and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Ozawa reference in view of the Matsukawa reference and the Hara et al. reference.

However, this rejection is respectfully traversed, as independent claims 10, 14, 29 and 30 have been amended to be patentably distinguished over the combination of cited prior art references.

More particularly, each of claims 10, 14, 29 and 30 has been amended to include a limitation that a slit is formed in each of two adjacent metal line patterns, as disclosed in at least FIG. 13 of the subject application. The Hara et al. reference, which the Examiner relies on for teaching a slit, discloses a slit formed in corners of a guard ring 12, and does not teach or even suggest forming a slit in each of two adjacent metal line patterns that are spaced apart from each other, as claimed in independent claims 10, 14, 29 and 30. Therefore, independent claims 10, 14, 29 and 30, as well as claims 11-13 and 15-17, which depend either directly or indirectly from claims 10 and 14, respectively, are believed to be patentably distinguished over the combination of cited prior art references and in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 10-17, 29 and 30 are respectfully requested.

F. Conclusion

Since none of the cited prior art references, alone or in combination, either anticipate or render obvious claims 10-17, 29 and 30 of the subject application, it is respectfully submitted that claims 10-17, 29 and 30 are in condition for allowance, and a notice to such effect is respectfully requested.

Finally, if the Examiner believes that additional discussions or information might advance the prosecution of the instant application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below to expedite resolution of any outstanding issues.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of this application is earnestly solicited, and an early and favorable action upon all of the claims is hereby requested.



Date: February 10, 2004

Respectfully submitted,

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PETITION and
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT CHARGE AUTHORIZATION

This document and any concurrently filed papers are believed to be timely. Should any extension of the term be required, applicant hereby petitions the Director for such extension and requests that any applicable petition fee be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1645.

If fee payment is enclosed, this amount is believed to be correct. However, the Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1645.

Any additional fee(s) necessary to effect the proper and timely filing of the accompanying-papers may also be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1645.

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